

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
FOR THE PRESS

MARCH 27, 1962

NO. 195

SINO-SOVIET BLOC MILITARY AID TO CUBA

The following summary on Sino-Soviet bloc military aid to Cuba is issued in response to numerous requests for up-to-date information on this subject.

For about a year and a half the Sino-Soviet bloc has supplied Cuba with large-scale military assistance. Bloc military deliveries -- primarily from the USSR and Czechoslovakia -- have included a wide assortment of land armaments ranging from small arms through heavy tanks. Bloc aircraft supplied to Cuba include MIG jet fighters, helicopters, transports, and trainers. Extensive military training has been provided both in the bloc and in Cuba. Communist military aid has turned the Cuban military establishment into one of the most formidable in Latin America, and it has introduced a military capability hitherto not present in any of the Latin American countries of the Caribbean area. However, there is no evidence that the Soviet Union has supplied Cuba with missiles, or that missile bases are under construction in Cuba.

The Soviet Union at first moved cautiously in responding to Cuban requests for military assistance. Once underway, however, the Cuban buildup proceeded swiftly. Bloc support has aided the Castro regime in consolidating its control over the Cuban people. For the past several months the Bloc's military aid program in Cuba has been concerned primarily with training, assimilating new equipment, and remodeling the Cuban military establishment along bloc organizational lines.

Background

Preliminary attempts to procure Soviet bloc arms were initiated by the Cuban government as early as 1959, but no firm military aid pacts were concluded until the summer of 1960. During 1959 and early 1960, Cuban purchasing missions traveled frequently to the bloc to investigate new sources of supply. Discussions reportedly covered a whole range of equipment from small arms to modern jet aircraft. Mikoyan's visit to Cuba in February 1960 signaled the beginning of a massive bloc trade and aid program which gained momentum throughout 1960 as U.S.-Cuban relations deteriorated.

Military negotiations with the USSR and Czechoslovakia in 1960 were followed up by a well-publicized trip to Prague and Moscow by Raul Castro, which probably was the occasion for the conclusion of secret arms deals. By August, Czech small arms were being issued by some Cuban militia units, and in the autumn the first major shipments of Communist arms began arriving in Cuba.

Scope of Bloc Military Aid

From the autumn of 1960 until the late summer of 1961, bloc arms deliveries were made regularly to Cuban ports. No financial information on the bloc's arms deals with Cuba has been disclosed, but it is estimated that on the order of \$100 million worth of equipment and technical services has been provided. Moreover, several hundred Cuban military personnel have received training, including pilot training, in the Bloc.

On January 5,

On January 5, 1962, during a military parade celebrating the third anniversary of takeover by the present regime, Cuba unveiled an array of military hardware indicative of deliveries up to that time. Units equipped with medium and heavy tanks, assault guns, truck-mounted rocket launchers, artillery, antiaircraft weapons, and mortars, as well as rifles and machine guns, were featured prominently. A fly-by of MIG jet fighters, including some high-performance MIG-19's, was one of the highlights of the air display.

In the latter part of 1961 the focus of the bloc's military aid to Cuba was on assimilation of new equipment, intensive training, and completion of the reorganization of Cuba's military establishment. Recently, however, military shipments to Cuba have resumed and for the first time have included small naval vessels.

The capabilities of the Cuban ground forces have increased steadily since the introduction of bloc equipment and training in the autumn of 1960. The ground forces are estimated to number some 300,000. All units are equipped with bloc small arms and many have heavier equipment as well. Bloc aid is strongly reflected in Cuba's ground forces organization which resembles that of the East European satellites. Soviet bloc arms aid has given the Cuban ground forces an armored, artillery, antiaircraft, and antitank capability largely lacking in the past and unknown to other Latin American countries of the Caribbean area. Thousands of modern bloc small arms have been delivered. Soviet bloc instructors have been used extensively for training purposes and they serve as full-time advisors to some individual units.

Following the takeover by the present regime, the capabilities of the Cuban air force declined sharply as a result of purges and defections of key personnel. One of the major goals of the new regime, however, was to acquire combat jet aircraft, and most of the Cuban military trainees who went to the bloc in the summer of 1960 were air cadets. Their training has been one of the most important tasks of the bloc's military air program. Cuban pilots have now returned to Cuba where they are continuing instruction on MIG jet fighters which arrived last summer. The bloc has also supplied helicopters, piston-engine trainers, and small, single engine transports. About a dozen IL-14 twin-engine transports were delivered this autumn for the Cuban civil airline. No Soviet bombers are known to have been delivered to Cuba.

During the first year and a half of the bloc's military aid program, the Cuban navy did not receive any significant assistance. Since the first of the year, however, a number of Soviet patrol vessels and motor torpedo boats have been supplied.

BLOC ARMS AND MILITARY EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED TO CUBA

<u>Type of Equipment</u>	<u>Estimated Quantity</u>
MIG jet fighters	50-75
Medium and heavy tanks	150-250
Assault guns	50-100
Field artillery	500-1000
Antiaircraft artillery	500-1000
Mortars	500
Small arms	200,000
Patrol vessels	Some
Motor torpedo boats	Some